

Address
before the
Methodist Revolutionary Society

by
H. L. Pinckney

1838-

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DELIVERED BEFORE THE

METHODIST BENEVOLENT SOCIETY,

AT THEIR

ANNIVERSARY MEETING,

In the Methodist Protestant Church, in Wentworth-Street,

ON THE 1st MONDAY IN JULY, 1835.

BY H. L. PINCKNEY.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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1835.

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CHARLESTON, JULY 10th, 1835.

HON. H. L. PINCKNEY.

DEAR SIR,

At a Meeting of the Methodist Benevolent Society, held last Evening, the following Resolutions were unanimously adopted :—

Resolved, That the thanks of this Society are due to the Hon. H. L. PINCKNEY, for his appropriate and eloquent Address, delivered in behalf of the Society, at their Anniversary on Monday Evening last.

Resolved, That a Committee be appointed to communicate the foregoing to Mr. PINCKNEY, and to solicit from him, (in the name of the Society,) a copy of his Address for publication.

In performing the duty assigned us (as the Committee,) we beg leave to add the expression of our individual feelings by tendering you our warmest thanks for your generous effort, and talented display, in the cause of suffering humanity. Such zeal in such a cause, calls for more than our humble commendation. Allow us now, in the name of the Society, to increase our indebtedness to you, by requesting a copy of the Address for publication.

With sentiments of sincere regard and esteem, we are

Very Respectfully, Yours,

JOHN KINGMAN,
W. LAVAL,
WM. MOOD,
JOHN H. HONOUR. } COMMITTEE.

JULY 13th, 1835.

GENTLEMEN:—

I have received your favour, inclosing a Resolution of the Methodist Benevolent Society, by which I am requested to furnish, for publication, a copy of the Address I delivered at the late Anniversary. In reply I have only to say that I feel much obliged by the kind opinion the Society has been pleased to express concerning it, and that if they deem it of any service to the excellent cause of Christian Benevolence, it is at their disposal. Permit me also to thank you for the very kind and flattering manner in which you have communicated the desire of the Society, and believe me, with respectful and friendly regards,

Yours truly,

H. L. PINCKNEY.

To

JOHN KINGMAN,
W. LAVAL,
WM. MOOD,
JOHN H. HONOUR. } COMMITTEE.

ADDRESS.

GENTLEMEN :—

BEFORE I proceed to the remarks I design to offer, permit me to thank you for your kindness in having appointed me to address you upon this occasion. To be connected with your Association is an honor of which any individual may be justly proud, and for the very gratifying manner in which the privilege of membership* has been conferred upon me, I beg leave to tender you my most grateful acknowledgment. The cause in which you are engaged is one of the purest and noblest to which the efforts of rational and accountable creatures can be directed. It not only has its origin in the most amiable principles of our nature, but it is equally sanctioned and enjoined by the dictates of reason and the requisitions of religion. In such a cause, therefore, I am happy to be enlisted as a humble coadjutor.

The theme of Benevolence, it is true, is destitute of novelty ; but it is not, therefore, deficient in importance or in interest. Generally speaking, indeed, those subjects that are most familiar, are the most important, and a topic will be found to be either trite or otherwise in proportion to its connection with the welfare of society. What, for instance, can be more familiar to our thoughts or senses, than the works of nature ! yet where is the mind that is not constantly filled with their importance, or the poetic eye that does not daily discover new sources of pleasure in their loveliness ! And how little interest would even the living

*Mr. P., prior to his appointment to deliver the Address, had been elected an honorary member.

oracles of truth possess, if novelty alone were necessary to impart it! yet where is the heart that is not always warmed and expanded, as it rises from the wonders of creation to the still greater wonders of redemption, and contemplates the God of nature in the still more attractive character of the God of Love!

As the want of novelty, therefore, cannot destroy the intrinsic importance and abiding interest either of the works of nature or the tenets of religion, so neither can it affect the ever springing attraction of benevolence, because it is identified with all that is useful and lovely in the one, and with all that is high and holy in the other. Yes, this is the great principle that regulates the universe. This is the great principle that lies at the foundation, and directs the operations, both of the natural and moral government of God. How else can we account for the existence of the material universe, or of animated nature, or of the mental and moral faculties of man! What is it that created so many systems upon systems, worlds on worlds, and that still sustains and controls them, in all their exquisite symmetry, and harmonious arrangement! What is it that addresses us in the music of the spheres, or attracts and dazzles in the lustre of the firmament! What is it that arrays the sun in gorgeous splendour, as he springs, like a bridegroom, from the chambers of the East, or the moon in mild and gentle majesty, as she nightly repeats the story of her birth, or spreads out the stars, in a sea of glory, as they twinkle sweetly in the blue concave, singing to each other the divinity that made them! What is it that stretches out the curtains of the sky, and decorates the earth with every form of loveliness and every variety of charm! What is it that regulates the rolling seasons as they change, the majestic ocean as it ebbs and flows, and the invisible but prolific element that surrounds us, every breath of which is replete with life! What is it that paints the flowers of the field, or mellows the fruits that regale our senses, or imparts its fragrance to the refreshing zephyr of the morn, or gives all its sweetness to the melody of birds! What is it, in short, that we perceive in every thing around us—in the air, the ocean, and the earth—in all that we have, and all that we are—in a world abounding with blessings, and in all

the various faculties of man so admirably adapted to enjoy them—in the comforts of civilization, and the elegancies of refinement—in the pleasures of friendship, of the domestic circle, and of social intercourse—in literature, science, and the arts—in mild and equal laws and regulated freedom—and in every thing, in fact, physical, intellectual, and moral, which can gladden the heart and enrich the mind, promote the happiness of individuals, or elevate the condition, and establish the security, of social, civil, or political society ! What is it but the all-pervading principle of divine benevolence ! And as this principle is thus incorporated in all the movements of the physical world, in all the endowments and enjoyments of intelligent creatures, and in all the institutions and advantages of civil society, so is it still more conspicuously manifested in the amazing redemption of our apostate race through the atoning sacrifice of the Son of God. Oh what was it but this *that pitied us, when there was no eye to pity, and that brought salvation, when there was no arm to save !* What was it but this that brought the Redeemer from his starry throne, and buried the glory of his godhead in the humiliating assumption of the form of man ! What was it but this that the angels sang, when they announced his birth, and that He himself proclaimed, as he ascended into Heaven ! What was it but this that gushed from the rich fountain of his bleeding heart, when he expired upon the tree, and what is it but this that now ever lives and reigns, at the right hand of God, to make intercession for transgressors !

Oh, for this love let rocks and hills
 Their lasting silence break,
 And all harmonious human tongues
 The Saviour's praises speak !

Benevolence, then, constitutes an essential feature of the Christian scheme, and, indeed, it belongs emphatically to the Christian era. Before the introduction of Christianity, the divine injunction, *Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself*, had never been known or regarded as a principle of moral or religious obligation ; nor, until then, had there ever existed a system whose vitality consisted in *visiting the widow and the fatherless in their affliction*,

or of which it was declared that the main pillars were *faith, hope, and charity, but of these the greatest is charity*. On the contrary, paganism was the prevailing religion of the world, and under its debasing and demoralizing influence, the world had long lain buried in darkness and enchained in vice—filled *with the habitations of cruelty*, and literally overrun with abomination and pollution. And what was it that expelled that darkness, and dissolved those chains! What was it that produced those great moral revolutions, of which we perceive and enjoy the fruits, in the enlightened and refined condition of the Christian portions of the globe! What was it that abolished all the unnatural practices and barbarous customs, the foul superstitions and infernal rites, by which former ages had been sunk in the profoundest depths of moral degradation—and that not only abolished them, but erected on their ruins, and substituted in their places, all those correct conceptions and elevated sentiments, all those philanthropic principles, practices, and institutions, by which Christian society is decorated as a moral firmament with stars, and by which Christian nations have been raised to an immeasurable height, above the unhappy and degraded regions in which Pagan and Mahometan delusions still prevail! What, but the benignant spirit of the Gospel! And what is it that shines so sweetly in all those noble institutions which Christian piety has dedicated to the glory of God and the good of man! What is it that finds fathers for the fatherless, homes for the houseless, a haven of rest for those *who know not where to lay their heads*! What is it that succours the afflicted and relieves the sick, teaches the dumb to speak and the deaf to hear, preaches the Gospel to the poor, educates their offspring, and makes them virtuous and useful members of society! What is it that brings little children to the Redeemer, and puts them in his arms—despatches myriads of messengers, upon the wings of love, to proclaim salvation through a fallen world—disseminates the word of life, in every tongue, that it may be understood and embraced by every people—and sends hosts of devoted martyrs, with their lives in their hands, *to the Isles of the sea, and the ends of the earth, to preach the Gospel to every creature!*

What is it that arrests the baleful progress of intemperance—combats vice and iniquity in every form—instructs the ignorant and reclaims the dissolute—and hoisting, the banner of the cross upon the ocean, as well as on the land, gathers *the abundance of the sea* to God, and causes the hymn of thanksgiving to ascend, from the bosom of the great deep, to Him who holds the world of waters in his hand! What is it, in one word, that has organized, and keeps in operation, so many and such admirable engines, for the moral and religious renovation of the world; and that has invaded, and will continue to *overturn*, every kingdom of darkness and system of delusion, driving the false prophet from his mosques and dumb idols from their thrones, 'till *He, whose right it is to reign, shall have the heathen for his inheritance, and the ends of the earth for his possession*, and until the whole world, regenerated and disenthralled, shall rise from ignorance to knowledge and from vice to virtue, from the debasing bonds and deathlike gloom of superstition and fanaticism to the *marvellous light and glorious liberty* of the Christian religion! What, but this same spirit of Christian benevolence! And is all this nothing! Shall men engage with ardour in the fleeting pursuits of time and sense! Enter with vehemence into the tumultuous contentions of the political arena! Combat, like gladiators, for popular applause! Plunge with avidity into every scheme of wealth, and every avenue of honor or distinction! Nay, even rush in crowds at every prospect of pleasure, running, like shadows themselves, after the shadowy scenes of idle dissipation and amusement! And shall we be told that there is nothing interesting or important in Benevolence! Oh, how low and depraved must be the mind that harbours such a thought! How cold and insensate the heart! How destitute of every noble sentiment! How utterly incapable of a virtuous aspiration! Nothing in Benevolence! Then is there nothing in human misery or happiness. nothing in the most painful, or the most pleasurable, emotions of the human heart: nothing in nature or religion: nothing in general tranquillity or social order. But for this principle, and what would the world have been! Extinguish it now, and what would the world become! He who

estimates correctly all that is involved in these simple propositions, of human dignity and felicity on the one hand, or human suffering and degradation on the other, will perceive at once that it is not only not a subject of no value or attraction, but that it is absolutely coextensive in importance with the essential welfare of the human race. He who can neither realize this importance, nor feel this interest, is rather to be pitied, than reproached, for the deplorable obtuseness of his moral sense !

The field of Charity is always extensive, and necessarily requiring much activity and labour. Individual efforts, therefore, generally speaking, can accomplish but little in so wide a sphere, and amidst the multiplicity of objects that demand attention. It is only by united action that the friends of humanity can attain their ends. Their operations, as well as others, to be useful or effective, must always proceed upon the great principle of the division of the labour : a principle not less applicable to moral than to physical objects, and just as important to a system of benevolence as to the production of the rarest specimens of art. Well, therefore, have you acted in organizing an association for this laudable purpose. Reason and experience both demonstrate that, by combining your resources and dividing your employments, you have adopted the best, if not the only mode, by which individual donations can be most prudently dispensed, the greatest amount of relief extended, and the greatest degree of good produced.

Of this excellent Association the present constitutes, I think, the seventh Anniversary. On the recurrence of this day, then, your minds must naturally revert to the years that are past, and to the manner in which they were employed. And how delightful must such a retrospect be ! How full of grateful emotion and sweet remembrance ! During that period, how much active beneficence have you displayed, and what a large amount of benefit achieved ! How often have you carried a mourner to the foot of Bethesda, applied the balm of Gilead to a broken heart, poured oil and wine into the wounds of sorrow, and smoothed the passage of the dying to the grave ! How many parents have you saved to their children, and how many innocent children restored to the

arms of their distracted parents ! How many helpless sufferers, pining in obscurity and languishing in pain, have you restored to health, and strength, and usefulness ; and not only restored to themselves and their families, but made, *new beings*, and put *new songs into their mouths*, by their conversion unto God ! Perhaps some of those objects had once seen better and happier days ! Perhaps they had possessed an independent competence, or had even been surrounded by the luxuries of life, but had suddenly been precipitated from wealth to penury, and from comfort to distress ! Perhaps, when you saw them, they were not only contending with the pangs of poverty, but with the bitter anguish of a *wounded spirit*, and therefore required for their recovery, not so much the skill of a physician, as the soothing appliances of sympathy, and the sweet consolations of religion ! Perhaps some of them were emigrants—far from their native land—far from their kindred and their friends—separated, by a boundless ocean, from all who would rejoice at their welfare, or weep at their decease—and who, but for you, would have lived unknown, and died unpitied ! And many of them, doubtless, were born in our own country, or even in our own city—reduced, by vice or misfortune, to the depths of obscurity and indigence—strangers in their own natal place—outcasts in their own community—and who, but for you, would have had no kind friend to mitigate their pain, no cheering voice to sustain them in the dark hour of death, no friend to follow their remains, no light to guide them beyond the gloomy precincts of the grave ! All these, however, you attended and benefited with the true fervour of Christian affection ! All these you watched over, like *ministering spirits*, renewing the physical abilities of some, causing others to rejoice in the *light of life*, and enabling others to find that *to die is gain*. Yes, my friends, how many a worthy and industrious man was some unhappy being who, but for you, would have flown for refuge to despair, and closed his sorrows and his life in crime ! How many a pious Christian was some blasphemous wretch whom your charity snatched *as a brand from the burning*, and who, but for you, would have gone to eternity with curses on his lips ! How many a glorified saint, now

rejoicing around the throne of God, with palms in his hands and a crown upon his head, was some poor *prodigal son*, who, but for you, would never have returned to *his Father's house*, nor tasted the riches of redeeming love! How delightful then must this retrospect be! Delightful, whether as relates to yourselves, or to the objects of your kindness; whether you reflect that *charity covereth a multitude of sins*, or only remember that *He who converteth a sinner, saveth a soul from death!*

The present occasion, however, not only invites you to recall and enjoy the fields you have occupied and the conquests you have won, but it urges you to look forward also, and to press on, with renewed energy and ardour, to the fields and labours that lie before you. You must not be *weary of well doing*. Much as you have done, much more remains to be accomplished. Charity is not the work of a day, or a year, but it is *a race set before us*, which must be *patiently run*. The objects already relieved, numerous as they may be, are but few to those you may yet be called upon to succour. *The poor you will always have with you*, and probably in increasing numbers, and, therefore, there will always be ample ground, and abundant motive, for the exercise of charity.

According to your Constitution, your Society was established *for the relief of the sick poor!* Here, then, in the very instrument of your organization, is an emphatic declaration of the motives in which it had its origin. You looked around upon the community, and you saw that *man is, indeed, born to sorrow as the sparks fly upwards*. Wherever you cast your eyes, you beheld the silent tear, or heard the heaving sigh, as it trickled down the care worn cheek, or burst from the overcharged breast, of the helpless children of affliction. Your hearts melted within you at the sight, and you piously determined to spare no exertion, not only to relieve their temporal wants, but, with the blessing of God, to convert *the sorrow of this world that worketh death*, into that *godly sorrow that produceth salvation*. Now what stronger motives can possibly be urged to induce you to continue in this holy cause! To relieve the poor! And what is poverty! Take an unhappy

being, with a dependent family, for whom he is unable to provide—with helpless children, clamouring for food, and tearing his heartstrings with the moans of hunger—to whom the sun brings no relief by day, and from whose miserable couch sleep flies by night—whose body is worn down by fruitless toil, and who carries about him, wherever he goes and whatever he does, a corroding sorrow, which, “like a worm in the bud,” preys upon his heart, and drinks up the vital spirits of his soul ! This is poverty ! And is not this enough ! Is not this sufficient of itself to excite the sympathy of a feeling mind ! What then must it be, to be not only poor, but sick ! To be compelled to struggle, not only with the wretchedness of want but the anguish of disease—to lie upon some miserable pallet, perhaps upon a naked floor, destitute of all aid or comfort, racked by torment, inflamed by fever, with no pitying hand to cool the parched tongue, nor even perhaps, to close the dying eye ! This it is to be poor and sick ! And can it be necessary to deepen this picture, by introducing new objects of affliction, or to represent the unfortunate as the father of a family, and to surround his bed with those, whose lives are bound up in his, and from whom their only earthly stay is about to be removed forever ! No, my friends, you require no such descriptions. You have often visited such abodes, and relieved such objects, and therefore can much more readily conceive such scenes, than I describe them. Permit me to remind you, however, that the same considerations which originally induced you to enter on this sacred work, still exist in all their force, entreating and persuading you, not only to renew, but to increase your efforts. These considerations relate both to yourselves, and to the objects who require your aid. You know, by your own experience, that there is a *sadness of the countenance by which the heart is improved*, and that it is *better to go to the house of mourning, than to the house of feasting*. You know, also, by your own happy consciousness of the fact, that *whoso watereth others, shall himself be watered*, and you carry in your bosoms a precious foretaste of a rich reward, in the animating conviction that you have so far observed the golden rule of *doing unto others, as you would that they should do*

unto you. For your own sakes, then, you will not relinquish this happy experience, by now retiring from the field, after having so long *put your hands to the plough*. You will not now cast off the divine assurance that *he, who giveth to the poor, lendeth to the Lord*, nor forfeit *the treasure already laid up in heaven*, by ceasing now to improve *the talents* committed to your charge. You well know that sympathy with the unfortunate is as important to yourselves, as it is to them : and that it is not less your interest to cultivate it, for your own personal happiness and spiritual advancement, than it is your duty, as men, to render the services of humanity to your fellow creatures in distress. Indeed there is no motive, selfish or liberal, of pleasure or profit, of reward in this world or the hope of reward hereafter, that does not urge you to unflinching and animated perseverance in your benevolent career. But these are not the only inducements to persistence—there are others, equally cogent, that relate exclusively to the poor, and arise not only from the sufferings, but the tendencies, of their unfortunate condition. Sad as poverty is, under any circumstances whatever, it is peculiarly deplorable when unsupported by religion. In all such cases, its natural and almost irresistible effect is, to deaden the affections, and to brutalize the heart. It is for this reason that the abodes of the poor are so frequently the habitations of cruelty, and the haunts of vice. Yielding to the strong temptations of necessity, or sinking under the heavy load of an insupportable life, they either rush to the commission of unlawful acts, or plunge into intemperance as a refuge from their woes, and thus hurry on, through a brief and desperate career, to an untimely and an ignominious end. This then is the proper field for charity, and particularly when it finds the victim of poverty on the bed of sickness. Of all others, that is the time for the gentle offices of kindness. Sickness is always favourable to the impressions of religion. The hour of affliction is the hour of conscience. It is then that the mind recalls most forcibly the misdeeds of the life, and the heart is most disposed to contrition and amendment. It is then, when the world is shut out, when time appears rapidly converging to eternity, and the soul, retiring within itself, reflects upon the solemn realities of a future state, it is then that he, who ministers

to the body, may also cleanse the soul of "the perilous stuff" that preys upon it. Here then it is that Benevolence shines in all its godlike purity and lustre. It seeks out the lonely chamber of the sufferer—enters the dark region of despair and death—and while, with every tender art, it soothes his feelings and relieves his wants, it looks with pity on his sin-sick soul, leads him gently to that heavenly *fountain opened for uncleanness*, and revives and saves him in its healing stream. Oh how lovely is this virtue ! How pious is this office ! And can you think, for a moment, then, of relaxing your exertions in this sacred cause ! Are you tired of being the almoners of God, and the honoured instruments of salvation ! Or are the poor already so deeply indebted to your kindness, that you deem it unnecessary to strive further for their benefit ! Oh, remember that the promise is only to the *faithful*—and that unless you really continue *faithful over few things*, you cannot expect to be made *rulers over many*. Remember that of *him, to whom much is given, much will be required* ; and that as your property is not your own, but God's, whose stewards you are, so every *unfaithful steward shall be beaten with stripes*. Gird up your loins then and trim your lamps. Let the flame of charity burn more vividly than ever in your breasts. Let the deeds of the past only operate as a stimulus to greater efforts for the future. Stop not at *the things that are behind*, but press on to *those that are before*. While the poor bless you now, for the good you have already done, let the stream of your beneficence flow more copiously hereafter, that their blessings may thicken as the years roll on. And while many an eye now beams with gratitude, and many a bosom sings for joy, at the remembrance of the past, let it be your care to prove, by the records of the future, that your Society is, in deed and in truth, an oasis in the desert—a perennial fountain in a dreary land—a life-giving object, to which, like the brazen serpent in the wilderness, the children of affliction may look up and live !

And, having said thus much, it is unnecessary, perhaps, to pursue the subject : but as the cause of Benevolence, like every other good cause, has encountered, and is still destined to encoun-

ter, opposition, it cannot be improper, not only to remove the objections urged against it, but to exhibit the grounds upon which it claims the assent of the understanding and the devotion of the heart.

As strange and, indeed, unnatural, as it may seem, considering the age in which we live, there are those who not only would do nothing for the poor themselves, but would, if possible, arrest all charitable action on the part of others. Philanthropists, who consider poverty rather as a crime to be visited with punishment, than a misfortune entitled to assistance : Legislators, who rather than not display a profound acquaintance with political economy, would stop up even the pitiful and sluggish rills of public charity itself ! The doctrine of these economists is, that the only tendency of charity is to encourage pauperism, and generate idleness and vice, and therefore that it ought to be repressed upon the principle of general utility. They regard every act of humanity as an injury to the public, and would therefore have the unfortunate to perish for the public good. They hold that the poor are useless, and therefore unworthy of protection; that they are unproductive, and therefore have no right to the enjoyment of the fruits of industry. Now to all this it is sufficient to reply, that no system, however excellent, could stand for a moment, if an occasional perversion or misapplication of its principles were sufficient to destroy it. An argument against the abuse of a principle is no argument against the principle itself. It is evident that we must either aid the poor, or suffer them to perish. This is the unanswerable reply to all the sophistry against public charity. But public charity is not sufficient. There are many who require assistance besides the inmates of an asylum or a hospital ; many worthy and industrious individuals, who, with occasional aid, may maintain their families comfortably, and rear up their children for useful occupations, but who are often prevented from labouring by illness, and often unable, even in health, to procure adequate employment. These may not be the proper objects of legal or compulsory charity, but they are certainly proper objects for Christian benevolence. Where the law stops, there private kind-

ness should begin. Where the cold stream of legislative bounty freezes, there the warm spirit of the Gospel moves, supplies the defect, and carries on the work. What if charity has been sometimes misapplied, or acted as a premium to idleness and vice! These are errors or evils that may be avoided or corrected: but better that unworthy objects should deceive us, than that meritorious individuals should receive no aid. Better, far better, that a little charity should be thrown away, than that the waters should cease to flow, or the holy fountain be extinct. No: let it fall, like the gentle rain, upon the evil and the good. Let others, if they please, speculate upon the impolicy of benevolence—be it ours to feel its spirit, and act upon its principles. Let others refuse to extend relief, until they are satisfied upon every point—be it ours to assist the sufferer first, and then to inquire, if need be, into the causes of his wretchedness. But enough on this point. Why analyze theories unworthy of analysis, or refute objections that refute themselves! He who would eradicate benevolence from the social system, because of occasional injuries or impositions, would extinguish the sun because it may generate pestilence, or chain up the wind because it may bear it on its wings!

Let us turn, now, to the claims of benevolence: and, in considering these, let me ask your attention to a brief delineation of its character, its motives and obligations, its pleasures and rewards!

What then is its character! I answer, in the first place, that it is the purest Patriotism. There are many modes in which men may exhibit public spirit, but none in which they can display it in such true purity and beauty, as in systematic attention to the poor. Every community consists, emphatically, of two great classes—those who require assistance, and those who are able to afford it. Now I will not deny that the resources of the rich may be usefully and patriotically applied to many an enterprize that has no relation whatever to the poor. Nor is it an objection to a public spirited undertaking that even the public accommodation is rendered subordinate to individual advantage. The wealth of a community consists of the wealth of individuals, and the happiness of the whole depends essentially on the prosperity of its parts.

Every work of public utility, therefore, deserves commendation, however its primary object may be the personal benefit of its projectors. After all, however, this kind of patriotism, useful and advantageous as it is, can only be regarded as an enlightened self-interest. The patriotism of benevolence is of a far higher and more estimable character. It is perfectly generous and disinterested, benefitting others without reference to self. If he then, deserves to be considered a benefactor of society, who projects a valuable scheme, how much more does he, who gives life to many *that are ready to perish*; and if he is entitled to the proud appellation of a patriot, who sustains public liberty by his eloquence, or even dies for his country on the field of battle, how much more is he, who mingles freely with the children of adversity, devotes his resources and his efforts to their welfare, and diffuses amongst them *the oil of joy for mourning, and the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness*!—And benevolence is fame: the richest, purest, most enviable fame. It is emphatically of *good report*. It is lovely in the sight of God and man. The favorite attribute of Deity, it is the crowning ornament of his followers on earth. Unlike all other fame, it *maketh rich and addeth no sorrow*. Who would not covet a reputation so pure, and exalted, and enduring! Who would not prefer the name of a Howard or a Wilberforce to all the distinction that wealth or public favour can confer! What is the honor of a statesman but the ephemeral breath of popular applause, often acquired without desert, and still more often lost without a fault! What the renown of a warrior but that of a destroyer of his species—whose theatre of glory is a field of blood—whose crown of laurel is steeped in the tears of widows and of orphans! Or what is even the fame of a scholar or philosopher, high and desirable as that fame is which proceeds from the cultivation of literature and science, or the successful promotion of the arts of peace, what is even that to the delightful reputation of a good man, who is compared in scripture to a tree, with living waters at its roots, and of whom it is said,

Fresh as the leaf, his name shall live,
His works are heavenly fruits!

Nor is this all. Benevolence is luxury—the most refined enjoyment of the heart—the most exquisite banquet of the soul. Who would not desire to possess this feeling, and who may not if he would ! Man is essentially a creature of habits, and good habits may be acquired as easily as bad. The practice of doing good will as surely engender a generous disposition, as a systematic career of profligacy will sear the conscience and indurate the heart. Virtue, as well as vice, by being frequently embraced, becomes a source of pleasure and a fixed principle of action. Attend to the poor, no matter from what motive, and you will soon find that the heart and the hand will go together. Now the possession of a generous heart is a treasure in itself, and this treasure it is in the power of every individual to acquire. Let those, then, who are blessed in *their basket and their store*, only contract the habit of giving steadily and liberally, and they will soon realize that there is even more truth, than poetry, in loving *the luxury of doing good !*

And now, what are the motives and obligations to the cultivation of this principle ! They are too various to be noticed, except with the utmost brevity—and yet too important to be entirely overlooked. Men should be kind to each other, because man is essentially a dependent creature. We are born for the happiness of each other. The whole social system is but a chain of reciprocal dependence, the poor hanging upon the rich, and the rich upon the poor. While the poor, therefore, should always manifest their gratitude for every act of kindness by the rich, the latter should always do all that they can, by employment, counsel, or gratuity, to ameliorate the condition and promote the comfort of the former. As neither can do without the other, so they should be governed, mutually, by the kindest feelings. Again, men should be charitable, because of the uncertainty of life. The work of relieving the necessitous, should no more be postponed than any other of which we shall be required to render an account. To say nothing of the injury which the poor themselves must suffer, by an unwise procrastination upon our part, we never may be able to repair the fault. There is no con-

venient season in charity, any more than in repentance, or in any other duty. The injunction in the one case as well as in the other, is, now is the accepted time—work, while it is called to day, for the hour cometh in which no man can work. Let us be diligent, then, in the exercise of charity now,

While the lamp holds out to burn,

lest the crown of life be suddenly removed forever from our reach, and we find, when the dreadful knowledge will be of no avail, that

Graves can never praise the Lord,
For all is dust and silence there.

Again, men should be charitable, because of the vicissitudes of fortune. We are not only dependent upon God, *in whom we live and move*, and therefore daily liable to the visitations of his providence, but upon a thousand circumstances beyond our control, any one of which, *in the twinkling of an eye*, may break down our strong holds and remove our rock, convert affluence to penury, and comfort to distress. We live literally in a world of change. The revolving seasons themselves do not carry us with more certainty or frequency from the fragrant gales and delicious fruits of summer to the rigorous blasts and chilling embrace of winter, than thousands are daily hurried from the genial sunshine of prosperity to the keen and cutting coldness of adversity. All is uncertainty, all mutation. *Riches make to themselves wings, and flee away.* Of the truth of this sacred apothegm, our own city now adds another to the long catalogue of melancholy proofs. Where can we turn our eyes, and not perceive, not only Houses of God in ashes, but hundreds of habitations, late the abodes of cheerful industry and ease, all now lying in one undistinguishable mass of ruin, and exhibiting, like a city of the dead, a frightful scene of desolation ! And what is the moral of this painful scene ! What the lesson it should imprint upon our minds ! Shall it only excite us to a momentary display of feeling ! Shall it only produce an evanescent sympathy, a mere passing contribution, but no effect whatever upon our future conduct ! No ; *when the judgments of God are abroad, men should learn righteousness.* We should not only realize, in such a scene as this, the dreadful instability of human affairs, but

it should operate as a powerful incentive to the steady exercise of charity, while we have the power to afford it. It is a solemn and a warning voice. It teaches us, most impressively, that *all is vanity*. But a few weeks since, and those, whose dwellings have been scattered to the winds, were as able as we are to render benefit to others: to-morrow, we may, like them, be hapless objects of public commiseration. Let us then determine to do all the good we can, while we have ability *to toil in the vineyard*, lest the period suddenly overtake us when we can *work no longer*. Again, benevolence is recommended as a Christian virtue. The Scriptures abound with exhortations to its practice. Our Saviour has not only given us the most impressive admonitions, but was himself the good Samaritan, whose admirable conduct he has left us as a model. No one then can be really a Christian, whose heart is destitute of this ennobling principle. The mere donation of money is not charity. Its essence consists in the motive of the donor. If we would *feel*, in our hearts, that *it is better to give than to receive*, we must also *know*, in our hearts, that, in giving, we sincerely desire *to honor the Lord with our substance*. Ostentation in charity is like hypocrisy in religion. It may relieve the afflicted, and yet condemn the reliever, as one individual may save the soul of another, and yet lose his own. The true motive is love to God, as well as love to man. *Whatever ye do, whether ye eat or drink, it must all be done to the glory of God*. If this motive be wanting, the most liberal acts are but *sounding brass and tinkling cymbal*. The widow's mites were commended by the Saviour, because of the pure source from which her humble gift proceeded, whilst the large contributions of the Pharisees were condemned, because they were only offerings at the shrine of vanity. Let us then see to the motives of our actions. Let us not merely make a show of benevolence with our hands, or applaud it with our tongues, but let us endeavour to possess it, as a living principle, *a live coal from the altar*, within our hearts. Then, and then only, will our *alms and prayers*, like those of Cornelius, *come up as a memorial before God*, and be had in remembrance at his throne of grace. Again, and "though last not least,"

benevolence is enjoined as a Christian duty. In our reflections upon this subject, we are apt to regard it too much as a mere human instinct, or something estimable in the sight of men, and too little as a positive Christian obligation. It is in the latter point of view, however, that it ought always to be presented to the contemplation of professors of religion. It is not optional with us whether we will practice it or not. We are expressly commanded to perform it. It enters essentially into the composition of the Christian character. It constitutes a large portion of the field we are required to occupy, and of the armour we are required to wear, and of the cross we are required to carry. How direct and explicit is the precept, *If ye love me, love one another* : and how awful the denunciation, *If ye have not the spirit of Christ, ye are none of his*. Let us then enter the field allotted for our labour, and cheerfully bear *the heat and burden of the day*. Let us put on *the whole armour of God*, and go forth, *as children of the light*, to our masters work : and, as he has told us that *love is the fulfilling of the law*, let us strive to catch his spirit, that we may take up our cross with pleasure, and *go about*, as he did, *doing good* to men. In one word, let us do our duty in the very spirit of the divine injunction, that, by loving one another, bearing one anothers burthens, and *thus fulfilling the law of Christ*, we may inherit the blessings of his kingdom, and go, from our labours of love on earth, to those *heavenly hills*,

Where joy, like morning dew, distils,
And all the air is love !

And this brings me to the consideration of the pleasures and rewards connected with benevolence. The difficulty here, however, is not to enumerate, but to select them. God never recommended a practice, nor enjoined a duty, without an adequate and appropriate reward : and as, of all Christian virtues, charity is said to be *the greatest*, so are its rewards not only abundant but *exceeding great*. In the first place, the habitual performance of good deeds imparts a satisfaction to the virtuous mind which nothing else can inspire. As vice always bears in its bosom its own punishment, so does virtue its own enjoyment. Avarice may hoard its shining

heaps, or close its flinty hand, but it is still a painful feeling, and often productive of the bitterest remorse. Benevolence, on the contrary, produces a calm serenity, a delightful sunshine of the soul, which *the world can neither give nor take away*. He, whose heart is hardened to the poor, not only possesses no solid peace through life, (for how, indeed, can he be happy

Whom none can love, whom none can thank,
Creation's blot, creation's blank,)

but he is also classed amongst those of whom the awful sentence is recorded that they shall *never enter into the presence of the Lord*. He, on the contrary, whose *hand is open as day to melting charity*, bids *farewell to every fear*, carrying within him, as he does, that heaven of the heart, which is the assured and blissful antepast of the heaven that awaits him. And he not only enjoys his own approbation, but is beloved and honoured by all around him. The wise and the virtuous applaud him. Even those, who care nothing for religion, respect and commend him for adorning the doctrine he professes. And he secures the grateful attachment of the objects of his bounty. Nothing melts the heart like kindness. Nothing attaches one individual so strongly to another as acts of beneficence. Ingratitude is unnatural, and therefore not often found, at least amongst the poor. He who would injure a benefactor would be capable of sacrilege. Gratitude, on the contrary, is both natural and lovely. The child of benevolence, it adheres to its parent with filial affection, hanging on its looks, catching all its feelings, giving tear for tear, and smile for smile; or, as the humble ivy entwines and adorns the stately tree that protects it, so do the poor cling closely to their benefactor, spreading roses in his path, and pouring blessings on his head. And, above all, he enjoys the approval of his God. *Blessed is he that considereth the poor*. His own heart assures him of this blessedness. Often does he enquire of the oracles of truth,

“Who shall inhabit in thy hill,
“O God of holiness,”

and as often is he cheered and directed by the divine response, that it is the man.

“To whom the supplicating eye
 “Was never raised in vain.”

And thus he goes *on his way, rejoicing*. All his emotions and reflections are *pleasantness and peace*. He knows that he has not lived in vain. He knows that he has saved many, not only *from present oppression, but from coming wrath*. He reviews his course with pleasure, and looks forward to eternity with hope. He trusts and believes that *a crown of life is laid up for him, which his Lord will give him, when he makes up his jewels*. He therefore welcomes death as a friend, rather than dreads him as an enemy. He closes his career, laden with honor and with blessings: his grave is strewed with garlands. and thus he goes, through flowery fields on earth, to that celestial world, where

Flowers of Paradise
 In rich profusion spring.

Such is benevolence ! Such are its character, its obligations, its pleasures, and rewards ! Such are its benefits to ourselves and to others, and such its acceptance in the sight of God ! Come, then, let us all act in a spirit worthy of the occasion that convenes us. Let us put away all pride, and vanity, and ostentation. Let us realize our entire dependence upon God, our utter unworthiness of the least of his mercies, and our solemn obligation, in gratitude to Him, to be humane and generous to our fellow-men. Let us remember that our Redeemer, whilst on earth, was the poorest of the poor: that he became poor, *that we, through his poverty, might be made rich*; and that he has taught us, both by instruction and example, not only to pity, but by active exertion and self denial, to befriend the poor. Come, then, let us feel that the ground, on which we stand, is holy. Let us realize that we are in the temple of benevolence. Let us all assemble around her sacred altar. Let us all come, with grateful hearts and cheerful hands, and lay free offerings upon it, that they may ascend as a sweet-smelling savour to the throne of Grace. There is nothing sectarian or exclusive here. This Society knows no distinctions amongst the sons and daughter of adversity. It embraces, without discrimination, all who are poor and sick. In

the true principles of the Gospel, it neither knows, nor desires to know, any thing of a sufferer, except the extent of his wants, and the proper mode of administering relief. Here, then, is a common cause. Here is an altar at which all may worship. Come, then, let us all make a common oblation to this common cause, and offer it, as an incense of sweet and balmy odour, to our common God.

And now, Gentlemen of the Society, having discharged the duty you assigned me, I feel that it is time to bring these observations to a close. I cannot conclude them, however, without reminding you, as Christians, of the heavy responsibility that rests upon you. You have entered into a covenant that cannot be broken. The vows you have taken are upon you for life. The cause of God, therefore, is in your hands, as soldiers of the cross, and much of its success or dishonour depends upon the manner in which you bear his standard and fight his battles. Should you relax in your fidelity, either in the work of charity or any other work, not only will your own personal piety decline, but the cause of religion will be greatly injured. If, on the contrary, you continue *firm, immoveable, and abounding in good works*, every effort for the benefit of others will react with a most salutary influence upon yourselves. I need not remind you that, in Christian benevolence, *there is that scattereth and yet increaseth*, nor that to him *who giveth prudently, it shall be given again, full measure, pressed down, and running over*. Persevere, then, in your noble cause. Your own graces will be quickened, and your own characters confirmed. Others will learn to imitate your example, a generous emulation will be excited who shall do most to glorify God by exhibiting the meek and lovely spirit of the Saviour, and thus the standard of true piety will be exalted, and the cause of religion strengthened and diffused. Bear the poor always on your hearts. Think of their desolate and forlorn condition. Think how they travel through a dreary land, with no waters, or fruits, or pastures, to sustain them. 'Tis yours to supply both their temporal and spiritual wants. 'Tis yours to convert their barren Shinar into a blooming field! 'Tis yours to provide them with the fruits of Eschol, and the sweet streams of Meribah. 'Tis yours

to strike the rock, to revive them with its gushing flood, and to enrich their desert with the rose of Sharon. Go on then, in your noble work. Carry with you, wherever you go, the wonder working rod, and the banner of the cross, and let it always be your aim

“ To mark from day to day
 “ In generous acts your radiant way.”

And may your Society prosper and increase ! May each succeeding Anniversary find you more and more laden with the trophies of victory ! And when, at length, you shall have *finished the good fight*, may each, and all of you, be received, *as good and faithful servants*, into that kingdom of Glory which the Redeemer has prepared for those that love him !

There, garlands of immortal joy
 Shall bloom on every head,
 And sorrow, sighing, and distress,
 Like shadows, all be fled !

FINIS.







